

GRIND
by
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OVER BLACK:

Title card: **'...We all have it comin', kid.'--Clint Eastwood, Unforgiven**

Then fade in on:

EXT. THE CITY - DAY

Shots of a city sky--vibrant, blue, pricked with a spattering of reaching, resplendent skyscrapers...and then booming down on a busy, sturdy, southwest morning frenzy--street vendors, canners, newspaper salesmen, latte drinkers-- humming lively before a network of zooming vehicles zipping their way under viaducts and around off-ramps.

An arrogant, obnoxious voice disturbs the scenery:

MARK (V.O.)

Uh-huh...

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

A GAS COVER is flipped open. The CAP is screwed off. A NOZZLE is jammed into the gas tank. A HAND squeezes the PUMP HANDLE.

An SUV sits like royalty at the gas station, receiving its Monday morning petro-breakfast.

MARK (V.O.)

...Well tell him that it was Mark McDuffin the Chief Assistant to the John Deere VP that fired him, not Mark McDuffy, Mac-man, McDog his old college roommate...

Holding the gas pump is MARK MCDUFFIN(30s). He sports a tight suit jacket, overly shiny tie, and fabulous hair. He cradles his CELLPHONE as he pumps.

MARK (cont'd)

That was twenty-four years ago, bro-ham. I'm a pretty big dog now...Not true. He's not my real brother.

Mark holsters the gas pump. He gets in his car. He turns the KEY in the ignition, throws the GEAR in DRIVE and stomps on the GAS PEDAL.

EXT. CITY HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The SUV drives, dodging and weaving in and out of traffic, apparently in a big hurry.

Cars are HONKING at him, seemingly from all directions.

MARK

(into phone)

Yup. And also tell him thanks for helping us all move offices last year, but, no, I won't be writing him a letter of recommendation.

A couple of COFFEES are thrown towards his car, but, as the SUV swerves, all they can splatter onto is the asphalt.

INT. SUV PATHFINDER - DRIVING - CONTINUOUS

Mark turns the steering wheel, talking on his cell phone.

MARK

(into phone)

Do that for me? So awesome. Thanks, bud...

Mark hangs up his phone...pins the gas pedal...He passes any slower car in his way. He passes one, sucks his teeth, and flicks a glare of dismissive scorn over to its driver. The car HONKS.

EXT. BUSY INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The SUV speeds up and cuts off a BEAT-UP, RED STATION WAGON, causing it to SWERVE and FISHTAIL. It HONKS its horn like crazy.

INT. SUV PATHFINDER - CONTINUOUS

Mark barely notices the shrinking station wagon in his rear view mirror, but he gives it the middle finger regardless.

Mark rolls a finger around an IPOD. He is dismayed as he scans.

MARK

Ah...man, what happened to my Genesis?

FREEZE FRAME on Mark's pouty reaction.

Then we hear: A cool, resonant, lecturing MALE VOICE (ala Little Children) chimes in:

MALE VO

...I'd like to etch out an intriguing scenario for you. A scenario that could forcefully construct itself around any one of us, on any routine, run-of-the-mill, plain ol' commute to work. Shall we?...Excellent...Now, where to start?

ACTION RESUMES, as Mark's thumb navigates his Ipod furiously.

MARK

...If that bitch erased my stuff...

Note: throughout the story during the VO, we often cut to, or insert over the image, STATISTICAL GRAPHICS and/or CORRESPONDING STILL IMAGES that illustrate the VO's narration.

MALE VO

So, let's say a man, we'll call him Mark...has a 38 mile drive each way, every day, to and from his office along a busy interstate highway...

EXT. BUSY INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The SUV passes a sign that reads: GRANTS EXIT

MALE VO

...That's 76 miles total each day.

(MORE)

And then there's another: ALBUQUERQUE, 37 MILES

Mark's cell phone RINGS(VO).

INT. SUV PATHFINDER - DRIVING - CONTINUOUS

The phone is at Mark's ear in a moment.

MARK

(to phone)

Jefferson...

Mark listens...He smirks, enjoying what he hears.

MALE VO

Of these 76 miles, 32 of them are through grid-locked traffic on a 6 lane highway.

MALE VO(cont'd)

So, if we look at the 5 lanes Mark is not in, we find that he passes or is passed by an average of 5 different cars every 40 feet per lane.

As he listens, Mark casually notices in the REAR VIEW MIRROR:

The station wagon closing in on him from behind.

EXT. BUSY INTERSTATE HIGHWAY

The station wagon weaves through traffic, catching up with Mark's SUV.

MARK

...Preachin' to the choir, Jefferson, that's what you're doing...I'm still paying court fees for that little Mexican skank-fest down in Tampa, 'member? Played my balls like castanets that one...And now this little snot-nose...

INT. SUV PATHFINDER - DRIVING - DAY

Mark steers through traffic, occasionally swerving hard.

MARK

Don't put that you're eighteen years-old on your fucking Myspace when you're not. Stop tryin' to catch a case, you know what I mean?...No, that WAS her school uniform...Completely scandalous. J, You gotta see the actual catalogs they print for that stuff...like butter off a hot biscuit, my friend...

MALE VO

That's five cars every forty feet for thirty-two miles.

MARK

Fine, I'll burn in hell. I'll bet it's got a mean barbecue...

MALE VO

That's 660 cars every mile, or 21,120 cars.

EXT. BUSY INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - DAY

The SUV is still MEANDERING its way through the traffic like a true road hog. The station wagon is noticeably MIMICKING his moves as though in hot pursuit.

MARK

Anyway, I call it a twisted method of seduction, and my fault totally it was not...

INT. SUV PATHFINDER - DRIVING - DAY

Mark on the phone.

MARK

Ya know, I don't care what her psych clinician thinks, or her social w--...She has a social worker? Hey, how do you know all this?

Mark shakes out a piece of gum from a pack and tries to toss it in his mouth, but his phone loudly BEEPS, causing him to miss his mouth. The gum PLINKS down and away somewhere below.

MARK (cont'd)

Shit...Yeah. Call you back.

Mark hits a button on his phone for the other line.

MARK (cont'd)

Yeah?...Sexy bitch, what's crackin'? Hey, why'd you stop following my twit brigade yesterday?...Uh-huh...

MALE VO

Though the rest of the 44 miles is not as heavy, Mark figures to pass at least another 2,000 cars.

Mark reaches a hand down to the floor, his fingers probing around for the gum.

MARK

...I did, of course I had fun. I paid for it.

Mark keeps searching the ground with his hands, causing him to BREAK:

EXT. BUSY INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The SUV BREAKS, causing the Station Wagon to BREAK just behind it and veer into the shoulder, almost hitting the metal RAIL. The furious HONKING resumes.

MALE VO

That brings the number to something like 23,120 cars that he passes every day.

The Station Wagon HONKS and HONKS.

INT. SUV PATHFINDER - CONTINUOUS

Still hearing the HONKING from behind, Mark's hand probes the ground for the gum. He finds it, and pops it in his mouth with supreme confidence.

MARK

(to himself)

Five second rule...

(on phone)

Terrific, darlin', but listen, I gotta call you back. It's the wifey on line one...Um-hmm, bummer for me--Why do you keep whispering? Unnecessary. She's on the other line. Stop it.

Mark looks over to the HONKING Station Wagon and rolls down his window.

MARK (cont'd)

(to station wagon driver)

Kiss my grits, you fuckin' succubus! I lost my gum!

FREEZE FRAME on Mark's perspective of the FEMALE DRIVER in the Station Wagon. She scowls, looking over at Mark through big black SUNGLASSES.

MALE VO

Statistically, half of these automobiles are driven by females. That's roughly 11,560 female powered vehicles purring daily down the city streets passing or passed by Mark...Let's examine this population.

Action resumes on Mark rolling up his window.

MARK

(back on phone)

...Hey, what'd I tell you about droppin' L-bombs? C'mon, it's not fair to Mark-dog. It makes me feel trapped and shit.

He pins the gas pedal...

EXT. BUSY INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The SUV accelerates and is back in traffic in no time, leaving the Station Wagon behind.

MALE VO

...In any given group of females, one in 28, or in this case, 412 of them, are having the worst day of their period.

A beat, and the Station Wagon accelerates, speeding down the shoulder.

The SUV gets moves down on EXIT RAMP. The Station Wagon follows.

INT. SUV PATHFINDER - DAY

Mark chomps on his gum, driving like a star. His phone BEEPS. He checks the call.

MARK

(on phone)

Hmm...my kid. My wife's kid. That IS what I said. No time. Talk soon. Toodles.

(switches phone lines)

Why are you calling me during school?...What? What does she mean, 'she can't'?...She's not busy, that's a lie, Tiff.

Mark listens, gets agitated, pinches the crown of his nose.

MALE VO

According to essential research companions such as the Journal of Science and Cosmopolitan Magazine, 70 percent of all women describe their love life as dissatisfying or unrewarding. That's 290.

In the rear view mirror, the Station Wagon races up along the SUVs side, driving on the shoulder.

MARK

Because, sweetie, your mom's a souse. You know how that one goes...Tiff, I hate saying it, especially to you, but, shit, kid, honestly, I only married her, and I've said this to you before, because, let's face it, this is the age of affirmative action, and...I did it for your education in case you weren't that bright. I did it for you. It was a good move...No, you ARE bright, but in case you w-- Whatever. At least I can say I consider your conception the only real, quality present she got me that whole year...You're welcome. Don't worry, kiddo...That sloppy woman needs just one really, really, really good shaking...Yup. A good, old-fashioned, eye-rollin' shakedown...I think she'd find it inspirational.

MALE VO

According to the National Institute of Health, 22 percent of all females have seriously considered suicide or homicide.

MARK

(chuckles)

Aren't you funny...Thirteen-year-old funny, but funny.

(sighs)

...Listen, I'll pick you up after your practice, you heard me?

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

The Station Wagon speeds past Mark's SUV and SWERVES hard to get in front of it. Then the Station Wagon BREAKS hard.

INT. SUV PATHFINDER - CONTINUOUS

Mark reacts and BREAKS hard too, forcing him to swallow his gum.

MALE VO

That's 64, and, as studied in The Washington Post, 34 percent charge men alone with being their most aggravating problem.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

He SWERVES and BRAKES his SUV into the side of the road. The Station Wagon, now in front of the stopped SUV, BRAKES as well.

MALE VO

...According to the National Rifle Association, 5 percent of all females in the U.S. carry a weapon, normally a small sidearm, and this number is increasing every day...

The Station Wagon's driver-side DOOR opens up and a FEMALE(40s) wearing a disheveled woman's suit exits the vehicle, closes the door, and dusts herself off, trying to compose herself--an attempt to quell her temper.

INT. SUV PATHFINDER - CONTINUOUS

Mark is still on his phone, coughing on the swallowed gum.

MARK

(looking out his window)
What in the entire fuck is going on?

As he recovers, he glances up towards the Female, now approaching his car, stepping closer...closer.

MARK (cont'd)

(on phone)
Yeah, I need to deal with this right now...Got it. 4:30...Don't make ME wait...Love you too, Princess.

Mark hangs up, staring ahead, annoyed.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

The FEMALE trudges towards Mark's car, glaring hard at him, straining to allow a crooked smile to cross her face.

MALE VO

Which means, potentially, that every single day, Mark drives past at least one female that has a pathetic love life, believes that men alone are the bane of her existence...

INT. SUV PATHFINDER

Mark's POV as he watches her standing by the driver's side door. She gestures for Mark to roll down his window.

MARK

Jesus, I could use some bear mace...

MALE VO

...has seriously considered suicide or homicide...

Mark, confused, sucks his teeth and rolls down his WINDOW. A moment passes.

MARK

(to Female)

Look, I don't have any change--

The Female grabs the door by the window frame, leans in, and thrusts her head partially inside the car. With her other hand, she brandishes a HAND GUN and sticks the muzzle's tip to Mark's head.

MALE VO

...is having the fiercest and goriest day of her period...

Mark's eyes widen in fear. The Females' eyes narrow with conviction, her teeth bared.

FEMALE

...I think you've got a leak.

Mark's eyes widen with intense fear. A fear borne from knowing that his life is on the verge of a fateful rendezvous with a dark oblivion.

MALE VO

...and is armed.

BLACK

...We hear TWO GUN SHOTS pierce through the darkness. After a

few seconds we hear a third GUN SHOT...

THE END